



# Speakers

If you want to get the most out of your DVDs, games and music, a decent audio setup is essential. We tune in to 18 speaker sets to help you decide which will be music to your ears



**T**he simple speakers built into some PC monitors are fine if you only want to hear alert beeps in applications, but if you use your PC for entertainment they're just not up to the task. You can buy a cheap pair of computer speakers from around £5, but you'll need to spend a little more to really bring music, games or films to life.

This month, we've gathered 18 sets of speakers from 11 manufacturers. They range from compact and affordable portable models, through stereo and 2.1 channel sets, up to expensive and complex surround-sound systems. Prices range from £17 to £163 including VAT, so you're sure to find speakers that suit your pocket as well as your lifestyle.



## CHOOSING... SPEAKERS

The first thing to consider when buying speakers is what you'll use them for. If you watch films or TV on your PC, you'll benefit from a surround-sound set. The two most common types of surround-sound speaker sets are known as 5.1 and 7.1.

A 5.1 set uses two front satellite speakers, one on the left and one on the right, and two matching rear speakers. In addition, a centre speaker in front of the listener reproduces dialogue, and a subwoofer produces powerful low bass frequencies. This gives six channels in all, but as the subwoofer reproduces only a narrow range of frequencies, it is expressed as just '1'. This gives us 5.1 – five channels and a subwoofer.

A 7.1 channel system includes all the same speakers but also has two side satellites that should be placed in line with the listener. Not all computers can produce 7.1-surround sound, so check your sound card before buying.

If you have a basic sound card or you only listen to music, you should consider a pair of stereo or 2.1 channel speakers, which consist of stereo speakers with a subwoofer. However, they won't provide such an immersive experience in a game or film with a multi-channel soundtrack.

If you want portable speakers for an MP3 player or notebook, make sure you buy a set designed with this in mind. Look for a supplied AC power adaptor and the option of battery power. Not all manufacturers supply a carry case, so you might need to find one for yourself.

Look for speakers with an auxiliary input if you want to connect an MP3 player without unplugging your PC. Nearly all desktop speakers have a headphone socket, which is a must for personal listening.

## NO PEAKING

You can tell a certain amount from the specifications of a speaker, but manufacturers' figures can be confusing. When comparing power ratings, always look for the Root Mean Square (RMS) figure given in our reviews. This measures the sustained power an amplifier can generate or that a set of speakers can handle. Never judge speakers by a Peak Music Power Output (PMPO) figure, which can be dozens of times higher.

applied Creative's EAX patch. Thus equipped, we valiantly battled mutants until shell-shocked, battle-scarred and jittery.

Our nerves were soothed by a range of test music that included rock, hip hop, electronic dance, classical, pop and jazz. We used the line level output from an iRiver iHP-140 with no equalisation, assessing quality at moderate volumes before pushing each speaker as loud as it would go. Finally, we tested frequency response and crossover performance using a range of steady and ascending sine wave tones at frequencies ranging from 10 to 20,000Hz.

## IN THIS REVIEW

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Logitech X-230  
Sony SRS-ZP1000  
Trust SP-3600A  
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### 5.1 AND 7.1 SURROUND-SOUND SPEAKERS

Altec Lansing 5100  
Altec Lansing GT5051R  
Creative Gigaworks G500  
Creative Inspire T6060  
Creative T7900  
Cyber Acoustics A-5640  
Genius SW-5.1 1000  
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### PORTABLE SPEAKERS

Cyber Acoustics CA-MP30  
JBL OnTour  
Think Outside BoomTube H201  
Trust sp-2900p

RMS values are generally a fair indication of volume, but remember that the scale is logarithmic. For example, a set of speakers rated at 100W won't sound twice as loud as a set rated at 50W. Sound volume is affected by other factors such as speaker sensitivity, so even two 50W systems will differ a little. Subwoofers normally have a higher power rating than satellite speakers because it takes more energy to create bass frequencies.

## CROSSOVER POTENTIAL

Subwoofers excel at creating low bass frequencies. They aren't very directional, though, so you can normally place the speaker at floor level anywhere in the room. You should take care not to cover the driver or bass port, though, as a working subwoofer moves large volumes of air.

It's easier to hear the direction of higher-frequency sounds, so position each satellite speaker carefully. For realistic stereo or surround sound, the satellites must handle tones between roughly 250 and 20,000Hz, and the subwoofer and satellites must be tuned so that one stops responding when the other starts. Our reviews explain which sets are well balanced and which sound uneven.

## HOW WE TESTED

**I**t might seem obvious, but the best way to test speakers is to use them for their intended purpose. For this Labs test, we subjected each set to a range of real-life tests that involved gaming, films and music.

To gauge entertainment performance, we played scenes from *Spider-Man 2* and *Lord of the Rings: The Return of the King*. We used a PC with a Creative X-Fi Extreme Audio sound card that can produce up to eight channels of surround sound. We checked sound positioning using Right Mark 3D Sound, available for download from <http://audio.rightmark.org>, then installed Doom 3 and



## REVIEW 2.1 SPEAKERS

LOGITECH  
X-230

RATING ★★★★★

PRICE £26 inc VAT

SUPPLIER [www.amazon.co.uk](http://www.amazon.co.uk)DETAILS [www.logitech.co.uk](http://www.logitech.co.uk)

Don't let the low price of Logitech's X-230 speakers fool you. They have a more compact subwoofer than most speakers here, but it produced cleaner sound than the similarly priced Hercules and Trust speakers. Each satellite has two mid-range drivers, visible through a cloth covering. Though not amazingly loud, they look great and produce detailed and balanced sound that holds its own against all but Creative's £163 Gigaworks set.

The right-hand satellite has a power switch, volume control and headphone socket. Its rear has a captive cable with a 3.5mm audio jack suitable for connecting a PC or MP3 player. Another cable connects to the second satellite, and a third leads to the subwoofer with its own level control. Each cable could be slightly longer.

These speakers would be improved by a second audio input and a bass level control, but they're outstanding for the money.



**SPECIFICATIONS** 2.1 speakers, line input, 32W RMS power. Part code 970123-0120

## REVIEW 2.1 SPEAKERS

HERCULES  
XPS 2.140

RATING ★★★★★

PRICE £30 inc VAT

SUPPLIER [www.amazon.co.uk](http://www.amazon.co.uk)DETAILS <http://europe.hercules.com>

With two unprotected 1.5" neodymium drivers on each silver satellite, this affordable set of Hercules speakers really attracts attention. That's also a fair description of their sound, which is very loud and biased towards high mid-range and treble frequencies. The subwoofer is powerful, responding from around 40Hz, so games and films have quite a bit of impact.

These speakers don't reproduce low mid-range frequencies as loudly, however, so music tends to sound somewhat unbalanced and harsh. Though louder than the subwoofer on Logitech's X-230s, the Hercules' unit sounds more woolly.

Most of the inputs and outputs are on the right satellite, along with a rotary volume and power control. The plug connecting this to the subwoofer felt a little reluctant to fit. The XPS 2.140 are good value, and are the only 2.1 set here with phono (RCA) inputs. They're very loud, but the Logitech X-230s cost less and sound better.

**SPECIFICATIONS** 2.1 speakers, line input plus dual phono inputs, 40W RMS power. Part code 4780402

## REVIEW 2.1 SPEAKERS

TRUST  
SP-3600A

RATING ★★★★★

PRICE £32 inc VAT

SUPPLIER [www.microdirect.co.uk](http://www.microdirect.co.uk)DETAILS [www.trust.com](http://www.trust.com)

Trust's glossy white SP-3600A speakers won a Best Budget Buy award in our last Labs round-up, so we wanted to see how they compare against the budget models in this test. They're the most affordable set of speakers with a wired remote control, which has a power switch, volume dial, headphone socket and second line input.

Both the thin, tall satellites have three tiny drivers. Many of the other sets using such small units suffered from a lack of low mid-range sound, but the SP-3600A's satellites have a full and balanced frequency response that sounds very natural.

The SP-3600As are fairly bass-heavy, with no bass level control. The small subwoofer lacks the precision of the Logitech X-230s. Turning up the volume, its sound became shabby long before the satellites, making this set fairly quiet in practice. With two inputs and a remote they're great value, but the X-230s are now even better.

**SPECIFICATIONS** 2.1 speakers, line input plus aux input, 28W RMS power. Part code 14236

## REVIEW 2.1 SPEAKERS

ALTEC LANSING  
MX5021

RATING ★★★★★

PRICE £95 inc VAT

SUPPLIER [www.microdirect.co.uk](http://www.microdirect.co.uk)DETAILS [www.alteclansing.com](http://www.alteclansing.com)

These 2.1 speakers look more like a hi-fi set than PC accessories, though the satellites' narrow base makes them easy to knock over. They're rated at 90W overall. Only Creative's Gigaworks G500 and the Cyber Acoustics A-5640 set sounded louder.

The MX5021s have a remote pod and wireless infrared controller. The subwoofer produces plenty of rich and precise bass up to high volumes, while the satellites fill the room with mid and upper ranges that are detailed, balanced and loud. Plenty of cable helps produce an expansive stereo sound.

We found ourselves returning to these speakers again and again for casual listening while setting up other tests. If you don't need surround sound but want to fill a room with good-quality music, this is the set to buy.



**SPECIFICATIONS** 2.1 speakers, line input plus aux input, 90W RMS power. Part code MX5021 BLACK

## REVIEW STEREO SPEAKERS

SONY  
SRS-ZP1000

RATING ★

PRICE £100 inc VAT

SUPPLIER [www.dabs.com](http://www.dabs.com)DETAILS [www.sony.co.uk](http://www.sony.co.uk)

We've included Sony's SRS-ZP1000s to see if a pair of amplified stereo speakers reproduces more balanced music than a bass-heavy subwoofer setup. Each magnetically shielded speaker has a four-inch bass driver and one-inch tweeter, with a power rating of 25W per channel.

Although there's no bulky subwoofer, the SRS-ZP1000s are much bigger than the multi-channel systems' satellites. They're solid and well made, but they don't look special. The heavier left speaker holds the amplifier and all the inputs and controls, including a mode switch that can boost bass for films and entertainment.

With no dedicated subwoofer, we weren't expecting these speakers to have a mighty bass output, but even so we were disappointed by their flat and poorly defined sound. They reproduced frequencies as low as 30Hz, but their response lacked gusto until around 200Hz. High frequencies wanted for detail and clarity, leaving the overall sound muddy and unsatisfactory.

**SPECIFICATIONS** Stereo speakers, line input plus aux input, 50W RMS power. Part code SRS-ZP1000

## REVIEW 2.1 SPEAKERS

XONIC GEAR  
Apocalypse 5

RATING ★★

PRICE £159 inc VAT

SUPPLIER Channel

Dynamics 08706 070540

DETAILS [www.zicplay.com](http://www.zicplay.com)

Transistor amplifiers replaced glass vacuum tubes years ago, but it seems that nobody told ZicPlay. The Apocalypse 5 speakers use a single valve, displayed like a trophy in the subwoofer's heat sink. Older members of the *Shopper* staff insist that a proper valve amp takes ages to warm up, but this one's ready to go in seconds.

These speakers have only one input and no headphone socket. The subwoofer carries expensive-looking metal knobs for volume and bass level, but there's no remote control. They sound very distinctive, with lots of bass and saturated treble. A little experimentation with the bass level and phase produced a good balance of low-frequency sounds, but we had to adjust the source to take the edge off the treble.

These speakers aren't amazingly loud, but even at full volume they remain free of distortion. Their over-bright sound isn't dreadful but, though unusual, they're overpriced.

**SPECIFICATIONS** 2.1 speakers, line input, 100W RMS power. Part code XG-AP05



## REVIEW 5.1 SURROUND-SOUND SPEAKERS

GENIUS  
SW-5.1 1000

RATING ★

PRICE £35 inc VAT

SUPPLIER [www.microdirect.co.uk](http://www.microdirect.co.uk)DETAILS [www.geniusnet.com](http://www.geniusnet.com)

Genius's SW-5.1 1000 speakers prove why you should only ever pay attention to RMS output figures. The 1000 in the model name comes from a claimed PMPO rating of 1,000W, which suggests that they should be very loud indeed. To be fair, the RMS figure is also prominent on the packaging. It's a comparatively puny 25W.

These speakers produced the worst sound of all the desktop sets. Their treble and high mid-range output was quite clear and balanced, but you could drive a truck through the gap where the lower mid-range should be. The subwoofer buzzed quietly to itself in between occasional limp outbursts when playing DVDs. We checked and re-checked the cabling, hoping we'd connected something up wrongly, but we hadn't.

At £35, they might seem like a bargain for 5.1 channel surround sound, but we can't recommend these speakers. For just £6 more, Logitech's X-530 set is in another league.

**SPECIFICATIONS** 5.1 speakers, three line inputs, 25W RMS power. Part code 31730356100

## REVIEW 5.1 SURROUND-SOUND SPEAKERS

LOGITECH  
X-530

RATING ★★★★★

PRICE £41 inc VAT

SUPPLIER [www.amazon.co.uk](http://www.amazon.co.uk)DETAILS [www.logitech.co.uk](http://www.logitech.co.uk)

Logitech's X-530 speaker set is the 5.1 channel version of its X-230 set and uses the same twin-driver satellite speakers. The subwoofer is larger than the X-230's, though, and at 25W is rated five watts higher. There's one set of inputs, attached via a short lead that is fixed to the right-hand satellite. The rear and centre speakers connect directly to the sub, but the set would benefit from longer cable lengths.

The X-530s sound amazing for such affordable speakers. The set is loud enough for games and films, but also has a clear and balanced sound that does justice to music. The subwoofer isn't much louder than the X-230's, but it sounds more precise and integrates well with the satellites' bottom end. If you have a small room and can live without an aux input, there's little point in paying any more than this for computer speakers.

**SPECIFICATIONS** 5.1 speakers, three line inputs, 70W RMS power. Part code 970114-0120

## REVIEW 5.1 SURROUND-SOUND SPEAKERS

CREATIVE  
Inspire T6060

RATING ★★

PRICE £49 inc VAT

SUPPLIER [www.savastore.com](http://www.savastore.com)DETAILS <http://uk.europe.creative.com>

Released in November 2005, Creative's Inspire T6060 speakers are among the newest in this group. Creative says that they have a "curved, minimalist style", but they look better in photographs than in reality. The 18W centre speaker's stand allows it to be angled up or down, but the four corner speakers make do with 8W each and rigid stands that fall out when you pick them up.

This set's modest cable lengths make it unsuitable for a large room. Although it has a similar rating to the Logitech X-530s, it doesn't seem as loud. Its satellites have a muted treble response, with a mid-range bias that can sound harsh at times. The subwoofer doesn't stamp its authority on films, games or music, and the set begins to sound shabby at loud volumes.

The T6060s have a useful wired remote control, but inspiration gets no further than their name.

**SPECIFICATIONS** 5.1 speakers, three line inputs plus aux input, 72W RMS power. Part code 51MF4075AA001

## REVIEW 5.1 SURROUND-SOUND SPEAKERS

ALTEC  
LANSING  
GT5051R

RATING ★★

PRICE £52 inc VAT

SUPPLIER [www.microdirect.co.uk](http://www.microdirect.co.uk)DETAILS [www.alteclansing.com](http://www.alteclansing.com)

A frequent complaint about multi-channel speakers is the mess of cables that connects them all up. It's possible to hide rear speaker wires away, but you still need a suitable wall or surface for the satellites.

We were interested to see if Altec Lansing's GT5051R speakers, which aim to produce 5.1 sound without rear satellites, are the answer. They have a conventional centre satellite and subwoofer, but the two front satellites also contain side-firing drivers, which bounce rear-channel sound from the room's side walls. Though this didn't produce convincing 5.1 sound in our tests, it did create an immersive feel.

The speakers have a good range of inputs, but are let down by their subwoofer. It produces well-defined bass, but even at its maximum level it can't match the satellites' volume. A quality 2.1-channel set would provide more impact.

**SPECIFICATIONS** 5.1 speakers, three line inputs, aux input plus dual phono inputs, 80W RMS power. Part code GT5051R

## REVIEW 5.1 SURROUND-SOUND SPEAKERS

ALTEC  
LANSING  
5100

RATING ★★★

PRICE £61 inc VAT

SUPPLIER [www.amazon.co.uk](http://www.amazon.co.uk)DETAILS [www.alteclansing.com](http://www.alteclansing.com)

Next to the GT5051Rs, Altec Lansing's 5100 speakers seem a conventional 5.1 set. Each satellite uses two one-inch neodymium drivers. Unusually, the subwoofer also has two drivers. Like the Creative Inspire T6060s, a louder centre speaker helps to deliver clear dialogue in films.

This set has the smallest satellites of all the desktop speakers. Their cast alloy stands seem nearly indestructible, but the drivers themselves are only lightly guarded. A wired remote gives control over volume, bass, treble, balance and a front/rear fader. It also has a useful mode control that can up-mix a stereo input to all six speakers.

Sound quality is OK, but the set is rather quiet above its 150Hz crossover frequency and doesn't begin to pick up again until around 270Hz. Music sounds good from mid-range frequencies upwards, but Logitech's X-530s are better balanced.

**SPECIFICATIONS** 5.1 speakers, three line inputs plus aux input, 73W RMS power. Part code 5100

## REVIEW 5.1 SURROUND-SOUND SPEAKERS

CYBER  
ACOUSTICS  
A-5640

RATING ★★★

PRICE £72 inc VAT

SUPPLIER [www.dabs.com](http://www.dabs.com)DETAILS [www.cyberacoustics.com](http://www.cyberacoustics.com)

The A-5640's wired remote control has a headphone output but no auxiliary input. Volume and bass levels are controlled by wheels, but these work in the opposite direction to what you'd expect. Similarly, the front/rear fader is controlled by a left/right wheel.

At 140W, this set has the second-highest power rating here. The cables attached to the rear satellites are so long that you could set them up on the moon and you'd probably still be able to hear them. All five satellites are loud, but the surprisingly insubstantial subwoofer can't match them. It's not very precise, and higher volumes leave it sounding muddy.

Our test tones revealed a buzzing resonance from the front left satellite around 350-500Hz, but this didn't show up in normal listening. This set is massively loud for the price, but it wouldn't be our choice.

**SPECIFICATIONS** 5.1 speakers, three line inputs, 140W RMS power. Part code 24964





## REVIEW 7.1 SURROUND-SOUND SPEAKERS

CREATIVE  
T7900

RATING ★★★★★

PRICE £78 inc VAT

SUPPLIER [www.dabs.com](http://www.dabs.com)DETAILS <http://uk.europe.creative.com>

We frequently see Creative's T7900 set bundled with expensive PC systems. The set has seven satellite speakers, with a separate tweeter on each of the front three speakers. The wired remote control has volume and bass level controls, along with a headphone socket and auxiliary input.

With so many speaker wires that aren't colour coded, this set is the hardest to configure. The subwoofer has four 3.5mm stereo inputs, but the supplied cable has three modified mini-jacks on the other end. You'll need to buy a couple of standard 3.5mm stereo leads to use this set with a non-Creative sound card.

The T7900s sound fairly well balanced, but they aren't massively loud. The subwoofer struggles at higher volumes, too. If you have the patience and the room for eight speakers, these provide better surround sound than a 5.1 set, but they're overkill for the average study or bedroom.

**SPECIFICATIONS** 7.1 speakers, four line inputs plus aux input, 92W RMS power. **Part code** 970114-0120

## REVIEW 5.1 SURROUND-SOUND SPEAKERS

CREATIVE  
Gigaworks G500

RATING ★★★★★

PRICE £163 inc VAT

SUPPLIER [www.savastore.com](http://www.savastore.com)DETAILS <http://uk.europe.creative.com>

The Gigaworks G500 is a high-end set of 5.1 speakers, aimed predominantly at gamers. With five satellites each rated at 36W and a 130W dual-ported subwoofer, they have the highest power output of this group.

Their wired remote controls volume, bass, treble, centre and front/rear balance, and also has a button to up-mix a stereo aux input to all six channels. There's a headphone socket, but the auxiliary input is on the subwoofer.

The G500s are very loud, and even at high levels they produce clearly defined sound. The huge subwoofer delivers focused and accurate bass right up to the set's full volume. The G500s give prominence to bass and treble frequencies, but with a bit of tweaking they can also produce wonderfully balanced music. Fantastic quality makes this set worth the expense.

**SPECIFICATIONS** 5.1 speakers, three line inputs plus aux input, 310W RMS power. **Part code** 24964

## REVIEW PORTABLE SPEAKERS

TRUST  
sp-2900p

RATING ★★

PRICE £17 inc VAT

SUPPLIER [www.amazon.co.uk](http://www.amazon.co.uk)DETAILS [www.trust.com](http://www.trust.com)

Trust's sp-2900p speaker set is the most affordable of the four portable models on test. It's slightly larger than the JBL OnTour and doesn't look as classy. Power comes from four supplied AA batteries, or from an optional 5V AC adaptor.

The sp-2900p connects to your sound source using a captive cable that is just 40 centimetres long. For neatness, this stows away in a compartment at its rear. It has a sliding on/off switch and buttons to increase or decrease the volume.

No carry case is supplied, so the sp-2900p is prone to damage if thrown in with other luggage. The tiny driver units aren't fully enclosed, so a loose Eiffel Tower statuette could punch a nasty hole in them. It wouldn't be too much of a loss, though, as this set is very quiet and prone to distortion. At this price they're easily replaced, but we'd save up for something better in the first place.

**SPECIFICATIONS** Stereo portable speakers, line input, 2W RMS power. **Part code** 14458

## REVIEW PORTABLE SPEAKERS

CYBERACOUSTICS  
CA-MP30

RATING ★★★★★

PRICE £20 inc VAT

SUPPLIER [www.amazon.co.uk](http://www.amazon.co.uk)DETAILS [www.cyberacoustics.com](http://www.cyberacoustics.com)

This portable speaker set costs just £3 more than the Trust sp-2900p, but it's much better. You may scoff at its 10W RMS power rating, but the two-inch centre speaker produces powerful bass, even if the reflex port underneath is a dummy. All three speakers are protected by sturdy wire mesh.

The CA-MP30s come with an AC adaptor, but two rear compartments each hold two AA batteries. We found it tricky to refit their lids. Cyber Acoustics supplies a soft carry case that should prevent scratches, but this set is quite big and doesn't look too special to begin with.

Fortunately, the CA-MP30 sounds great. The throaty bass is well integrated into the overall sound, and the set will play at reasonably high volumes before it starts to get sloppy. Clearer treble and better looks would improve it, but this set is practical and very good value.

**SPECIFICATIONS** 2.1 portable speakers, line input, 10W RMS power. **Part code** CA-MP30

## REVIEW PORTABLE SPEAKERS

JBL  
OnTour

RATING ★★★★★

PRICE £60 inc VAT

SUPPLIER [www.dabs.com](http://www.dabs.com)DETAILS [www.jbl.com](http://www.jbl.com)

JBL's OnTour is the most stylish portable set we've tested and feels better made than many of the desktop sets in this group. It comes with an AC adaptor, but can also work with optional AAA batteries which are fitted into a neatly integrated compartment.

The OnTour set is a little larger than a sunglasses case. It's protected in transit by a sturdy plastic front cover, which slides open to reveal two small drivers mounted behind strong wire grilles. The open cover forms a stand that inclines the speakers forward, creating a small bass-enhancing chamber against the desk, but the speakers direct most of their sound upwards.

Music sounds pretty good through the OnTour, with lots of clear mid-range and treble. Although it responded to test tones as low as 80Hz, it doesn't have the strong bass output of Cyber Acoustics' CA-MP30. The OnTour set looks and feels more sophisticated, but the CA-MP30 is better value.

**SPECIFICATIONS** Stereo portable speakers, line input, 6W RMS power. **Part code** ONTOURU

## REVIEW PORTABLE SPEAKERS

THINK OUTSIDE  
BoomTube H201

RATING ★★

PRICE £140 inc VAT

SUPPLIER [www.widget.co.uk](http://www.widget.co.uk)DETAILS [www.thinkoutside.com](http://www.thinkoutside.com)

This industrial-looking aluminium tube twists apart to reveal two satellite speakers and a subwoofer with a rechargeable battery. There's 1.2m of cable for each satellite, so this is the only portable set that can provide decent stereo separation. Although it's larger and heavier than the others, it comes with a strong shoulder bag for easy carrying. The subwoofer has a bass level control and a headphone output. The volume control, in a nod to Spinal Tap, goes up to 11.

Contrary to rock folklore this doesn't make the BoomTube louder, but it performs well considering its size. The bass responds with surprising authority from 50Hz, but the speakers had a notably peaky mid-range response.

If you need decent volume to accompany a presentation, the BoomTube will provide it. It also looks distinctive and provides a talking point, but £140 is a lot to spend on a portable speaker set.

**SPECIFICATIONS** 2.1 portable speakers, line input, 40W RMS power. **Part code** H201



## STEREO AND 2.1 SPEAKERS

| MANUFACTURER             | LOGITECH                                                              | HERCULES                   | TRUST                     | ALTEC LANSING                                               | SONY                                       | XONIC GEAR                          |
|--------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------|---------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| <b>Model</b>             | <b>X-230</b>                                                          | <b>XPS 2.140</b>           | <b>SP-3600A</b>           | <b>MX5021</b>                                               | <b>SRS-ZP1000</b>                          | <b>Apocalypse 5</b>                 |
| Rating                   | ★★★★★                                                                 | ★★★                        | ★★★★                      | ★★★★★                                                       | ★                                          | ★★                                  |
| Channels                 | 2.1                                                                   | 2.1                        | 2.1                       | 2.1                                                         | Stereo                                     | 2.1                                 |
| RMS power output         | 32W                                                                   | 40W                        | 28W                       | 90W                                                         | 50W                                        | 100W                                |
| Inputs                   | 3.5mm stereo                                                          | 3.5mm stereo, stereo phono | 2x 3.5mm stereo           | 2x 3.5mm stereo                                             | 2x 3.5mm stereo                            | 3.5mm stereo                        |
| Outputs                  | 3.5mm headphone                                                       | 3.5mm headphone            | 3.5mm headphone           | 3.5mm headphone                                             | 3.5mm headphone                            | None                                |
| Satellite cable lengths* | 1.7m between satellites, 1.7m sub to right-hand satellite, 1.7m input | 2m left, 1.7m right        | 2m                        | 3m                                                          | 2m between speakers                        | 2m                                  |
| Other                    | Bass level control                                                    | Bass level control         | Cabled remote with volume | Cabled remote with volume, bass and treble, infrared remote | Game/music mode switch, bass level control | Bass phase switch and level control |
| Price inc VAT            | £26                                                                   | £30                        | £32                       | £95                                                         | £100                                       | £159                                |
| Supplier                 | www.amazon.co.uk                                                      | www.amazon.co.uk           | www.microdirect.co.uk     | www.microdirect.co.uk                                       | www.dabs.com                               | Channel Dynamics 08706 070540       |
| Details                  | www.logitech.co.uk                                                    | http://europe.hercules.com | www.trust.com             | www.alteclansing.com                                        | www.sony.co.uk                             | www.zicplay.com                     |
| Part code                | 970123-0120                                                           | 4780402                    | 14236                     | MX5021 BLACK                                                | SRS-ZP1000                                 | XG-APOS                             |

## 5.1 AND 7.1 SURROUND-SOUND SPEAKERS

| MANUFACTURER             | GENIUS                           | LOGITECH                         | CREATIVE                               | ALTEC LANSING                                                          | ALTEC LANSING                          | CYBER ACOUSTICS                                      | CREATIVE                                  | CREATIVE                                                                                |
|--------------------------|----------------------------------|----------------------------------|----------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Model</b>             | <b>SW-5.1 1000</b>               | <b>X-530</b>                     | <b>Inspire T6060</b>                   | <b>GT5051R</b>                                                         | <b>5100</b>                            | <b>A-5640</b>                                        | <b>T7900</b>                              | <b>Gigaworks G500</b>                                                                   |
| Rating                   | ★                                | ★★★★★                            | ★★                                     | ★★                                                                     | ★★★                                    | ★★★                                                  | ★★★★                                      | ★★★★★                                                                                   |
| Channels                 | 5.1                              | 5.1                              | 5.1                                    | 5.1                                                                    | 5.1                                    | 5.1                                                  | 7.1                                       | 5.1                                                                                     |
| RMS power output         | 25W                              | 70W                              | 72W                                    | 80W                                                                    | 73W                                    | 140W                                                 | 92W                                       | 310W                                                                                    |
| Inputs                   | 3x 3.5mm line inputs             | 3x 3.5mm line inputs             | 3x 3.5mm line inputs, stereo 3.5mm aux | 3x 3.5mm line inputs, stereo 3.5mm aux, stereo phono                   | 3x 3.5mm line inputs, stereo 3.5mm aux | 3x 3.5mm line inputs                                 | 4x 3.5mm line inputs, stereo 3.5mm aux    | 3x 3.5mm line inputs, stereo 3.5mm aux                                                  |
| Outputs                  | None                             | 3.5mm headphone                  | 3.5mm headphone                        | 3.5mm headphone                                                        | 3.5mm headphone                        | 3.5mm headphone                                      | 3.5mm headphone                           | 3.5mm headphone                                                                         |
| Satellite cable lengths* | 1.8m front and centre, 5.5m rear | 1.7m front, 2.3m centre, 4m rear | 2m front and centre, 4m rear           | 2.8m front, 2.4m centre                                                | 2.8m front and centre, 4.8m rear       | 3.5m front and centre, 8m rear                       | 2m front and centre, 5m middle, 6.8m rear | 2m front and centre, 5m rear                                                            |
| Other                    | Bass level control               | Bass level control               | Cabled remote with volume and bass     | Bass, centre and surround levels, channel mode switch, infrared remote | Cabled remote, centre mix switch       | Cabled remote with volume, front/rear fader and bass | Cabled remote with volume and bass        | Cabled remote with volume, mute, upmix mode, balance, front/rear fader, bass and treble |
| Price inc VAT            | £35                              | £41                              | £49                                    | £52                                                                    | £61                                    | £72                                                  | £78                                       | £163                                                                                    |
| Supplier                 | www.microdirect.co.uk            | www.amazon.co.uk                 | www.savastore.com                      | www.microdirect.co.uk                                                  | www.amazon.co.uk                       | www.dabs.com                                         | www.dabs.com                              | www.savastore.com                                                                       |
| Details                  | www.geniusnet.com                | www.logitech.co.uk               | http://uk.europe.creative.com          | www.alteclansing.com                                                   | www.alteclansing.com                   | www.cyberacoustics.com                               | http://uk.europe.creative.com             | http://uk.europe.creative.com                                                           |
| Part code                | 31730356100                      | 970114-0120                      | 51MF4075AA001                          | GT5051R                                                                | 5100                                   | 24964                                                | 970114-0120                               | 24964                                                                                   |

## PORTABLE SPEAKERS

| MANUFACTURER             | TRUST                                  | CYBER ACOUSTICS                          | JBL                                       | THINK OUTSIDE                         |
|--------------------------|----------------------------------------|------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------|
| <b>Model</b>             | <b>sp-2900p</b>                        | <b>CA-MP30</b>                           | <b>OnTour</b>                             | <b>BoomTube H201</b>                  |
| Rating                   | ★★                                     | ★★★★★                                    | ★★★★                                      | ★★                                    |
| Channels                 | Stereo                                 | Stereo                                   | Stereo                                    | 2.1                                   |
| RMS power output         | 2W                                     | 10W                                      | 6W                                        | 40W                                   |
| Inputs                   | 3.5mm stereo with 40cm captive lead    | 3.5mm stereo                             | 3.5mm stereo                              | 3.5mm stereo                          |
| Outputs                  | None                                   | None                                     | None                                      | 3.5mm headphone                       |
| Satellite cable lengths* | N/A                                    | N/A                                      | N/A                                       | 1.2m                                  |
| Other                    | Four AA batteries, optional AC adaptor | AC adaptor, optionally four AA batteries | AC adaptor, optionally four AAA batteries | AC adaptor, integrated li-ion battery |
| Price inc VAT            | £17                                    | £20                                      | £60                                       | £140                                  |
| Supplier                 | www.amazon.co.uk                       | www.amazon.co.uk                         | www.dabs.com                              | www.widget.co.uk                      |
| Details                  | www.trust.com                          | www.cyberacoustics.com                   | www.jbl.com                               | www.thinkoutside.com                  |
| Part code                | 14458                                  | CA-MP30                                  | ONTOURU                                   | H201                                  |

\*Except where stated this is the maximum distance from subwoofer

## LABS VERDICT SPEAKERS

This Labs test shows that you don't always need to spend more to get the best quality. Cyber Acoustics' CA-MP30 portable speaker is a case in point. It's loud, sounds decent and costs just £20. There's no point in spending more unless you want a better-looking set, so it's our Best Buy.

The only one speaker system we'd recommend that costs over £100 is Creative's Gigaworks G500. If you want a set of surround-

sound speakers that will reproduce anything from your computer or MP3 player with true, pure sound, the Gigaworks set is well worth the price. It wins our Most Desirable award.

For anyone with a moderate amount to spend on some great speakers for music, Altec Lansing's MX5021 set is our Best Buy. Its subwoofer and satellites integrate well to produce a powerful, well-defined sound. The infrared remote makes it easy to

control from the sofa, so you could use it to turn an MP3 player into a room-filling stereo system.

Logitech's X-230 and X-530 sets were the biggest surprise. The X-230 set was the cheapest 2.1 system we tested, but it sounded better than all but Altec Lansing's MX5021, which costs over three times as much. The X-530 was the second cheapest 5.1 set, but sounded even better. Both are worthy Best Budget Buy award-winners. **CS**

## 2.1 SPEAKERS

**ALTEC LANSING**  
**MX5021**



## 2.1 SPEAKERS

**LOGITECH**  
**X-230**



## 5.1 SPEAKERS

**LOGITECH**  
**X-530**



## 5.1 SPEAKERS

**CREATIVE**  
**Gigaworks G500**



## PORTABLE SPEAKERS

**CYBER ACOUSTICS**  
**CA-MP30**

